

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>161</h1>
Chapter:	Working with Adolescents and Justice-Involved Youth	
Subject:	Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI)	Page 1 of 9
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Purpose

To describe how youth are screened, assessed and re-assessed for risk and protective factors and how risk assessment informs case planning.

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Introduction

Screening and assessment is a collaborative process involving the social worker, the youth and the family. The youth’s view of themselves, their strengths and issues of concern play a key role.

Gaining a clear view of how the youth and the family function as a system, including their structure, boundaries, patterns of communication, and any intergenerational features of the family system facilitates the design of a plan of services that accurately addresses relevant issues.

The social worker must recognize and acknowledge that the youth and their family have expertise about their strengths and needs. The social worker should help the youth and their family to see and use the strengths they possess and acknowledge that the greatest power for change lies within the youth and their family, not in other helping systems. Knowledge of and about the youth’s ethnicity and culture is important to develop a clear understanding of the meaning of the youth’s behaviors, the family’s interactions, the family’s child rearing practices and the family’s relationship to support systems.

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Gathering information from a variety of sources will increase the accuracy of the assessment:

- Motivational interviews with the youth and family members, individually and/or together;
- Review of written materials, such as school reports, psychological evaluations, available data, etc.
- Collateral interviews with other service providers and individuals who know the youth;

Definitions

Assessment: a process in which an individual’s strengths, weaknesses, problems and needs are identified to better understand their likelihood to engage in risky or delinquent behaviors and to assist with case planning.

CaseWorks: *The software application that supports YASI.*

Child in Need of Care or Supervision (CHINS): A child who:

- is without or beyond the control of his or her parent, guardian, or custodian (33 V.S.A. § [5102](#) (3) (C)); OR
- is habitually and without justification truant from compulsory school attendance (33 V.S.A. § [5102](#) (3) (D)).

See [Policy 52](#) for CHINS (A) and (B) definitions.

Delinquency: an act designated a crime under the laws of this State, or of another State if the act occurred in another State, or under federal law. (33 V.S.A. § [5102](#) (3) (9)).

Screening: a process in which clients are identified according to characteristics that indicate likelihood to engage in risky or delinquent behaviors. Moderate or high-risk youth require a more in-depth assessment.

“WHAT WORKS”: The “What Works” research indicates that interventions that are built on the Principles of Effective Interventions¹ are more likely to have the greatest

¹ (Palmer, 1995; Clear, 1981; Taxman & Byrne, 2001; Currie, 1998; Petersilia, 1997, 2002, Andrews & Bonta, 1998)

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impact. Such programs have a direct impact on recidivism.

The Principles of Effective Interventions are:

1. The Risk Principle:
 - Delinquent or acting out behavior can be predicted.
 - Intensity of treatment services should be matched to the risk level of the client. High risk clients require more extensive services while low risk clients require minimal or no intervention.
2. The Need Principle:
 - It is critical to identify the needs that can be linked to delinquent behavior.
 - The identified risk/needs factors that are dynamic or changeable (e.g. attitudes, values, and behaviors) should serve as the targets for intervention.
3. The Responsivity Principle:
 - The delivery of effective treatment programs that are responsive to the youth’s motivation, values, abilities, learning styles, and strengths.
4. The Program Integrity Principle:
 - Staff who deliver interventions to youth require supports including:
 - Policies and procedures that include ethical guidelines and standards of professional conduct,
 - Ongoing supervision and technical support,
 - Training and awareness, and
 - Adequate resources for sustaining integrity.

The Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument: The Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) is an evidenced-based risk/needs assessment and case planning tool, validated for youth ages 10–25. The domains of the tool are:

Legal History	Mental Health
Family	Aggression
School	Attitudes
Community and Peers	Skills (social/cognitive)
Alcohol and Drugs	Employment and Free Time

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The YASI includes a pre-screen and full assessment. The pre-screen includes roughly one-third of the full assessment items. The pre-screen is designed to assess immediate risk at low, moderate, or high. It does not assess for risk or protective factors in each individual domain. The pre-screen is not appropriate as a screening tool for mental health or substance abuse. However, the full assessment can be used to identify if further assessment is needed in these areas. Although the YASI does not serve as the screening or assessment tool for sexual risk to reoffend, it is still used for this population to identify risk in other areas. For youth with sexually harmful behaviors social workers should get an alternative risk assessment to determine risk to sexually reoffend.

Policy

The YASI shall be completed with youth who are at-risk (CHINS C), truant (CHINS D), or have committed delinquent acts.

Pre-Screen

1. Prior to completing a pre-screen, social workers should consult with the juvenile justice and adolescent services director about whether a pre-screen has been completed within the past six months.
2. Social workers must complete a pre-screen prior to disposition.
 - Pre-screen results for adjudicated youth that indicate low risk do not require a full assessment. Completing a full assessment after a pre-screen that has indicated low risk may only be done with supervisor or designee approval.
 - Pre-screen results for at-risk or truant youth that indicate low risk and high protective factors do not require a full assessment.
 - Pre-screen results for at-risk or truant youth that indicate low risk and low or moderate protective factors will require a full assessment.

YASI Pre-Screen for Adjudicated Youth

If the pre-screen results indicate low risk...	the assessment will be closed.
If the pre-screen results indicate moderate risk... OR If the pre-screen results indicate high risk...	the social worker will do a full assessment to determine whether the issues identified can be remedied by community supports and services.

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YASI Pre-Screen for At-Risk (CHINS C) or Truant Youth (CHINS D)

The legal section has a greater weight in the risk score, therefore social workers need to assess the pre-screen results in a different way when working with at-risk and truant youth.

If the pre-screen results indicate low risk and high protective factors...	the assessment will be closed.
If the pre-screen results indicate anything other than low risk and high protective factors....	the social worker will do a full assessment to determine whether the issues identified can be remedied by community supports and services.

Full Assessment

1. Complete a full assessment on all adjudicated youth cases in which the pre-screen indicates moderate or high risk.
2. Complete a full assessment on all at-risk and truant youth cases in which the pre-screen indicates anything other low risk and high protective factors.
 - All moderate and high-risk pre-screen results require a full assessment. On rare occasions, an override may take place when a pre-screen has indicated moderate or high risk. To request an override, the social worker shall forward the moderate or high-risk pre-screen results and collateral information to a supervisor, a district director or designee who shall conduct a second review. After review, the social worker shall determine if the override is appropriate. Any decision to override must be entered into the case file with an explanation for the override.
 - The full assessment and dispositional case plan must be completed within 35 days after the merits hearing.
3. Once a risk assessment is complete, the social worker must work with the youth and family to jointly create a disposition case plan and subsequent case plans.
4. When completed, social workers must submit the assessment including case plan to supervisor for review. A new case plan must be created within 60 days of custody and updated every six months.

Pre-screen and/or full screen results shall be printed and included in the case file.

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YASI Full Assessment

If the full assessment results indicate moderate risk...	the supervisor may determine whether to open a case.
If the full assessment results indicate high risk...	a case will be opened.

Re-Assessment

Re-assessment allows us to identify if risk and/or protective factors have decreased or increased in any of the ten domains. During re-assessment, *CaseWorks* will populate with the last assessment that was completed on the youth. Indicate what changes have taken place since the last assessment by adjusting the answers to the multiple-choice questions. Only dynamic factors will change. YASI will generate updated risk and protective factor scores.

Re-assessment must be done in the following circumstances:

- If the youth has been charged with a new delinquency; or
- Every six months for case planning; and
- Prior to closing cases.

Re-assessment may be done at any time during an open case, and is an effective engagement tool. The re-assessment is a way to highlight the youth’s successes and areas that need continued focus.

Youth and Family Engagement Through the Assessment Process

During the youth assessment process, the division engages with youth and families to build trusting relationships. The division supports youth and families in their own self-reflection of how to safely meet their needs, expand their relationships and safety networks, and determine their long-term needs. Building rapport, developing trust, building relationships and meaningfully engaging with youth, families, and their support systems is a process and takes time.

Rapport Building	Trust Building	Relationship Building	Support System Building
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This includes “getting to know you” level information • Provider may need to try 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust is built over time with small interactions • Set and model boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The youth may communicate proactively • Engage in youth-led activities; the youth is asking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The youth feels empowered to advocate for themselves • Leverage your relationships to

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Rapport Building	Trust Building	Relationship Building	Support System Building
multiple times before engagement occurs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in “healthy” activities in which the youth is most interested 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show up; be consistent and engaged Expect testing of boundaries from the youth Offer choices Advocate for the youth 	for support in specific ways and setting goals and boundaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the youth to advocate for themselves 	increase the youth’s support system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should not be the only supportive relationship the youth has; build the youth’s safety network.

Engaging with youth and families requires beginning where the individuals are in the stages of change. The youth, with the support of their family, should be identifying where they are and what they need to work on.

Stage of Change	What It Looks Like	Approach to Supporting Youth
Precontemplation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shows no interest in change and does not talk about change The focus is on thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validate feelings and lack of readiness Encourage healthy interests and self-exploration Build rapport
Contemplation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth expresses ambivalence about change The focus is on thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to validate Offer choices Encourage pro/con thinking Discuss the decision-making process
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth has early experiences with change or makes attempts to change The focus is on thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support youth in identifying and overcoming obstacles Build skills Take small steps Celebrate successes
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth engages in and practices new behaviors or change The focus is on behavior/action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on triggers and supportive strategies Empower youth to make decisions and build their self-esteem Articulate and process feelings about change/loss

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Stage of Change	What It Looks Like	Approach to Supporting Youth
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth sustains practice of new behaviors and commits to change The focus is on behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan ongoing support and relapse prevention Focus on processing feelings Do not romanticize the past
Relapse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth returns to former behaviors The focus is on thinking and behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not show or state disappointment Address safety and triggers Re-assess motivation Tell youth that you still support them Plan for re-entry

Development of Case Plans and Case Closure

Case plans and disposition reports for this population are completed using *CaseWorks*. The YASI re-assessment informs subsequent case plans. Social workers will work with the youth and family to identify goals, needs, and areas of risk to address in the future. The case plan and probation conditions should be responsive to the risk level. Case plans and the interventions of the division should target the domains contributing to the risk and the areas where the youth is motivated to make change.

To increase youth success in completing case plan requirements, social workers will engage youth in identifying their motivation and confidence in lowering their risk. This process includes partnering with youth to strategize regarding the areas causing risk and necessary action steps to meet case plan goals.

If Probation Requirements Are Met

If the youth has satisfied all conditions of probation, social workers shall consult with their supervisor about recommending that probation be closed. Social workers will ensure that any needed referrals or supports are in place prior to closing the case. If DCF custody is linked to the youth's delinquency, social workers and supervisors will discuss the appropriateness of requesting dismissal of DCF custody or filing a new CHINS petition to address the concerns that are preventing the youth from returning home. If the youth was originally placed in custody as a CHINS, then social workers must update the database to reflect the previous custody status at the time of probation discharge.

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If Probation Requirements Are Not Met

If probation conditions are incomplete, social workers shall re-assess, adjust the case plan as needed, partner with the youth to identify motivation and barriers, and work with the youth’s team on how to successfully complete probation.